

only adherents of the Orthodox religion might hold land, and the 421 following year the writing of Lithuanian in Latin characters was for- 565 bidden. In 1894 Catholics were forbidden to hold any position, how- [792] ● ever small, in the central or local administrative services. None the [186] less, the end of the century saw the foundation of a nationalist movement, led by Dr. Basanavicius, and the acquisition by the peasantry of a certain amount of land in small-holdings through the establishment of land banks and co-operative societies. In 1904 the law forbidding the printing of the Lithuanian language in Latin characters was repealed, and the flood of nationalist literature increased in volume.

In the other Provinces the situation of the peasants was even worse than in Lithuania, owing to the presence of the Baltic Barons, who were always loyal subjects of the Tsars, and who from the outset took a leading part in the administration of the Russian Empire. Under Russian rule the Barons secured the restoration of all privileges of which they had been deprived under the Swedish régime; moreover, they now created a closed corporation, consisting of 172 families which alone had the right to own land. Various attempts made by successive Tsars to improve the lot of the peasants were frustrated by the Barons, and serious rebellions were put down in 1783-4 and again in 1802. After the latter, Alexander I issued an ordinance in 1804 limiting serfdom, but its effects were nullified by the Barons. Laws abolishing personal serfdom altogether in Estonia (1816), Courland (1817), and Livonia (1819)¹ did little to improve matters, since freedom was of little use to peasants with no claim either to tenancy or ownership of land. In 1849, however, Alexander II enacted a new Agrarian Law abolishing forced labour and providing for the purchase or hire of certain lands by the peasant communes. Under Alexander III (1881-94) a determined policy of 177 Russification was initiated, aimed as much at the German as at the 671 native population; indeed, the later native movement of 1905 may 172 be traced largely to the indirect encouragement which it now received from the Russian Government's anti-German policy. Russian law and police organization were substituted for the existing German system, and the Russian language was made compulsory in schools. On the other hand, Letts and Estonians were allowed to hold Government posts. Towards the end of the century, too, there was an improvement in the material status of the peasantry; the 525 Russian railways brought trade to the ports of Riga and Libau, and in the towns a small proletarian class grew up which was ripe for the spread of revolutionary ideas. As in Lithuania, nationalist movements 186 were set on foot, and Young Lett and Estonian parties were formed. 668

These movements, in all three countries, were quick to exploit the

¹ The first emancipation of serfs in the whole Empire was in the Baltic Provinces.

563 tongue, without prejudice to the obligatory teaching of Lithuanian
671 as an additional language. Special clauses (Nos. 7 and 8) extended freedom to the Jews in all educational and religious matters. All persons born in Lithuania after the date of the Declaration, and unable to claim another nationality by birth, were recognized as Lithuanian nationals. The Declaration reproduced the 'guarantee article' of the Polish and other minority treaties, and the ordinary minority procedure was adopted.¹

563 In spite of this good beginning, the treatment of minorities in
798 Lithuania has not improved with the years. Nor was any great effort made to implement the promises of cultural autonomy described above. An autonomous organization established by the Jewish community in 1919, consisting of a National Council and a number of local branches, was abolished by a Christian-Democratic Government in 1924, and no other national minority has so far successfully availed itself of the right of cultural autonomy which it is supposed, in theory, to enjoy.

563 During the short period of parliamentary government the minor-
186 ities had already begun to suffer from the ultra-nationalism of the
871 Lithuanian parties, which was accentuated, especially with regard to the Poles, by the interminable Vilna controversy. After the establishment of the Voldemaras dictatorship in 1926, nationalist feeling ran higher than ever, and forty-eight Polish schools were shut. In August 1929 there were reports in the *Berliner Tageblatt* of pogroms against the Jews in Kaunas—always a centre of unrest owing to its high percentage of Jewish, German, and Polish inhabitants—and at Slobodka and Shanz, and there were general complaints that the State exercised too much control over the minority schools. Similar complaints were made, later on, against the Tubelis Administration, although in actual fact most of the Polish schools had been reopened. In August 1934 anti-Jewish outbursts occurred in Kaunas and elsewhere.

Since Herr Hitler's advent to power there has been a considerable amount of German propaganda in Lithuania with the particular object of securing the reincorporation of Memel in Germany.² The

¹ Jewish petitions and memoranda were submitted in December 1921 and in June and September 1925. The Polish Government made several complaints of the general treatment of the Polish minority in Lithuania in 1921 and 1922; in 1924-5 a number of petitions from the 'Committee of Polish Exiles', referring to linguistic, educational, and agrarian reform questions, were dealt with by the League Council. In August 1929, 34 Russians submitted a complaint relating to expropriation, which was considered by the Council in its 55th-56th Sessions, but which, in view of the remedial measures taken by the Lithuanian Government, was finally dismissed in January 1930. (See *League of Nations Official Journal*, xi, No. 8, p. 967.) A similar petition from 21 Ukrainians in November 1927 was also dismissed by the Council on September 8, 1928. (See *League of Nations Official Journal*, ix, No. 10, p. 1402.)

² The question of the minority in Memel is dealt with below, pp. 93-100.

ALBANIAN INTERLUDE AND BALTIC VISTA 209

populations were deeply rooted in tradition. Estonia, with a prewar population of 1,250,000, had about 900,000 Lutherans and approximately 215,000 Greek Orthodox. There was only a small group of Roman Catholics. Lithuania, on the other hand, with 3,000,000, was predominately Roman Catholic. Minorities of Lutherans, Jews, and Greek Orthodox constituted about one-fifth of the population. More than half of the population of Latvia belonged to the Lutheran Church, but there were substantial Catholic and Greek Orthodox minorities. The organizational activities of the Churches were varied and rich. In Lithuania, for example, with two archdioceses and four dioceses, more than 800,000 persons were enrolled in various lay organizations. The largest daily newspaper was in Catholic hands, and the total circulation achieved by the religious press was impressive. In Latvia likewise, publications under religious auspices numbered more than a fifth of those printed.

The first Communist occupation, dating from June 15, 1940, engulfed all three nations in tragedy. The Russians decreed that every organization established before their seizure of control "jeopardized public security," and religious institutions and organizations were suppressed. Their property was confiscated, and they were forbidden to maintain any contact with the outside world. Religious instruction was curtailed drastically, the clergy being called upon to sign a pledge that they would desist from teaching religion either in public or in private. Waves of Communist propaganda, much of it directed against religion, passed over the country, burying every attempt at counteraction. Within a year the Russians had destroyed every overt vestige of the autonomous culture which these small countries had fostered during the limited time of their independence.

It was done ruthlessly, brutally, barbarously. More than

210 RELIGION BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

661 60,000 Lithuanians were deported to Siberia. A number of
793 priests were murdered, and some are said to have been cruci-
● 798 fied. In Latvia and Estonia the numbers deported appear to
have been smaller; but the clergy of all denominations were
hounded, slain, and shipped to labor camps. It is no doubt
correct to say that no year in the history of predatory imperial-
ism since the dawn of time has been characterized by so com-
plete a lack of restraint. The individuality of the peoples was
rooted out with implacable-determination.

661 The Nazis drove the Russians out again, but in turn re-
798 sorted to suppressions of their own. It was a time of dire dis-
697 tress for the Jewish minority, and of course also for anyone
deemed to be opposed to their theories of race superiority.
Deeply religious folk from the Baltic States were shipped to
concentration camps. The Russians returned during the sum-
mer of 1944. This time large numbers of Lithuanians in par-
ticular fled to the West, the total being estimated at 80,000.
Of the remaining inhabitants of the three countries, it is be-
lieved that more than 500,000 have been seized and sent off to
Russian labor camps. There have been at least six round-ups
of slaves. The first was in Estonia at the close of 1948, and it
is believed that 50,000 persons were taken from their homes.
The others have been carried out with the same irrational
callousness. The deportations have stripped the countries af-
fected of virtually all religious leadership which might have
opposed Russian domination. Only 30 of Estonia's 250 Lu-
theran clergymen are still at work there, and comparable
figures have been computed for Latvia. One Catholic priest out
of five remains in Lithuania.

177 It is hardly necessary to state that the economies of the
461 countries affected are exploited for the benefit of Russia. But
861 one can grasp only with extreme difficulty the extent to which
agents of Moscow dominate political and cultural activity.